

Page 1 of 4
PERSONNEL POLICY
Fauquier County, Virginia

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Policy Title:
Employee Assistance Program

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40

I. PURPOSE

The Employee Assistance Program is offered by the Rappahannock-Rapidan Employee Assistance Program through the Family Guidance Services of Fauquier County.

As supervisors, we are naturally concerned with an employee's work performance and we are also concerned with the health and welfare of our employees.

Performance problems on-the-job can be caused by a variety of things - physical illness, emotional upsets, marital or family stress, drug addiction, alcoholism, or other serious problems. When work performance is affected and threatens the health and happiness of an individual, we want to do everything we possibly can to help.

II. SCOPE

The Employee Assistance Program has four objectives:

1. To motivate employees with personal problems which affect job performance to seek help.
2. To refer employees to the appropriate resources where they can receive help.
3. To restore productivity.
4. To retain valuable employees.

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Employee Assistance Program (RREAP) provides confidential, professional assistance to employees and their families. The program also provides supervisors and managers with a constructive way to help employees reduce the adverse economic impact that occurs when personal problems interfere with job performance.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

There are essentially three ways a person may enter the RREAP: Self Referral, management referral, or medical referral.

Self Referral

Any employee may call the RREAP office for information or to make an appointment to discuss a personal problem.

Management Referral

No change would be made in the county's usual supervisory procedures for handling performance problems. Supervisors and managers are encouraged to suggest a referral to the RREAP whenever there is reason to believe that an employee's work performance is the result of a personal problems.

Managers and supervisors may recommend or insist that an employee seek assistance when there is a noticeable decline in the employee's work performance that is not correctable through supervisory procedures or where there are specific on-the-job incidents which indicate the likelihood of a personal problem. The focus of the supervisor's referral is on the job situation, not on the nature of the problem.

Medical Referral

The employee's physician may refer the employee to the RREAP if a symptom or disorder is diagnosed which may be related to a problem likely to benefit from counseling.

If the employee chooses to accept a referral to the Employee Assistance Program, the employee is assured that no county record, other than the confidential RREAP referral files, will be maintained on whatever is discussed in the RREAP office. RREAP files are maintained in the strictest confidential manner required by law and ethical practice.

TYPICAL COUNSELING PROBLEMS

The Employee Assistance Program will provide short-term direct counseling or referral service for employees on a wide range of personal problems, including alcoholism, drug abuse, emotional problems, marriage and family problems, and financial problems.

DEPENDENCY ON MOOD-ALTERING CHEMICALSAlcoholism

Alcoholism is one of the least understood illnesses. It strikes at least ten people out of every 100 who drink. For those who develop alcoholism, life is a progressive downhill slide. Like the common cold, alcoholism knows no racial or economic bounds - both men and women are affected.

Because of the stigma so often associated with this illness, persons with alcoholism tend to deny that they have a problem and cover up their need for treatment. The realization that an alcohol problem exists in the life of someone close to you is the first step toward seeking assistance. Many persons with alcoholism feel that they can stop drinking without help. However, promising to stop or to control drinking is not enough. Experience in this field indicates

that alcoholics are unable to overcome their illness without an established program to follow. Through RREAP, employees who have an alcohol problem would be encouraged to seek and follow through with proper treatment.

Drug Abuse

"Drug abuse" is difficult to define in simple terms. Many people take drugs and most drug usage is legal and medically prescribed. Occasionally, even prescription medication can lead to serious problems. It is when drugs cause legal, social or medical problems, that we refer to drug abuse." When a consistent pattern or abuse is present, chances are fairly high that the individual will need professional help to stop the dependency that has developed.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

In a world filled with demands, stress, pressures, decisions and choices, it comes as no surprise that depression, anxiety and hypertension take their toll among employees at every level.

Normally we can handle these problems of daily life, but occasionally emotional problems get out of hand. It is the philosophy of RREAP that the employee who recognizes an emotional problem will seek assistance immediately.

If service beyond the RREAP counselor is needed, the employee would be referred to the appropriate professional community resource.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY PROBLEMS

One out of every two or three marriages may be headed for serious problems unless professional counseling is sought. Arguments are part of marriage, but occasionally arguments seem to go on endlessly. Mistrust may develop, and with it, lack of communication. Deterioration of the marriage often follows. Today, marriage counseling can be an educational experience. Counseling does not attempt to keep the couple together or to separate them - that decision is up to the partners.

The RREAP can assist with referral to an appropriate counseling resource.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Financial predicaments do not develop overnight. Today's world of instant credit makes living beyond one's means very easy. Thousands of people, from all walks of life, filed for personal bankruptcy last year - many filed for bankruptcy when it was not necessary. If they had sought the help of a financial counselor, that extreme step may have been avoided.

The RREAP can assist with referral to an appropriate counseling resource.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Regardless of the method by which an employee is referred to the Employee Assistance Program, the procedure followed by the counselors is the same.

The initial step is to determine the nature of the personal problem. Secondly, a plan of action, mutually agreed upon by client and counselor, is set up to resolve the problem.

Once the nature of the problem has been determined and there is agreement on the course of action, a referral may be made to other agencies, professional persons or treatment centers best equipped to provide assistance. The RREAP counselor continues to work with these services and with the employee to assure that they receive the best possible assistance and care.